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Letter to the Editor  
Sacramento Bee

The threat of rolling blackouts and an unreliable electric grid should be reason enough for legislators to support SB 1139 (Hueso), a bill that would create stability on the power grid by supporting purchase of reliable baseload power from geothermal sources.

Unfortunately, columnist Dan Walters recently raised false fears of cost and instability, clouding the issue like a carbon belching coal-fired power plant.

The truth is, geothermal is one of the most reliable power sources for the grid because it does not fade away at sunset (like solar) or fluctuate with the shifting breeze (wind power). And – talk about reliability -- geothermal does not even require refueling because its heat source is the earth, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week without fail. In contrast, power generation from fuel burning generators favored by Mr. Walters is only as reliable as the fuel supply mined, pumped, processed, piped, trucked and eventually fed into its gas emitting burners. Moreover, the cost of earth's steam does not escalate the way fuel prices have over the past decade.

Currently, the renewable energy portfolio for California is dominated by intermittent sources like wind and solar, with hardly any geothermal power included. With the loss of the 24/7 reliable power (2,000 megawatts) from Sano Onofre Nuclear Generator, it is especially important for SB 1139 (Hueso) to deliver supply and cost stability to an otherwise unbalanced electric grid in California.

Lastly, the Salton Sea area – a region plagued with the worst human health conditions and poverty in the state of California – would benefit immensely from the opportunity to tap into clean geothermal energy and sell it at competitive prices on the grid. After all, the main reason Californians support renewable energy over “cheaper” fossil fuels is because they want to embrace a policy of energy independence that also improves the environment. SB 1139 delivers on this promise and it deserves the continuing support of state legislators and the Governor.

Sincerely,

ROGER SHINTAKU  
Salton Sea Authority